

About the author



Elizabeth Gilbert

Elizabeth Gilbert was born in Waterbury, Connecticut, in 1969, and raised in rural Connecticut. She attended New York University, where she divided her time between her studies (she majored in political science) and short story writing. After college, she took several years to travel around the country to collect experiences to inform her writing. She financed these travels by working in bars, diners and ranches.

Gilbert says that everything she did in her twenties "was with an eye toward creating experiences to write about, gathering landscapes and voices." According to her, she has always found it easy to make the people she's met like her, except for some lobster fishermen she met while researching a novel on the coast of Maine.

Her experience-gathering paid off. By the time her first short story, "Pilgrims," was published in 1993, she had written in several genres: short fiction, novels, creative nonfiction, drama, and journalism.

In 2000, Elizabeth published her first novel, *Stern Men*, which was the book she had researched on the coast of Maine. *Stern Men* tells of brutal territory wars between two remote fishing islands, and was a New York Times Notable Book.

Elizabeth is best known, however, for her 2006 memoir *Eat Pray Love*, which chronicled her journey alone around the world, looking for solace after a difficult divorce. The book was an international bestseller, translated into over thirty languages, with over 10 million copies sold worldwide. In 2010, this memoir was made into a film starring Julia Roberts. The book became so popular that Time Magazine named Elizabeth as one of the 100 most influential people in the world.^{1,2,3}

¹ Brookes, E. (2009, January 9). Lucky me. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2009/jan/10/elizabeth-gilbert-books-interview-family>

² Gilbert, E. (n.d.). *Bio*. Retrieved from <http://www.elizabethgilbert.com/>

³ Mesher, D. "Elizabeth Gilbert." *Twenty-first-Century American Novelists*. Retrieved from <http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CH1200011640&v=2.1&u=burl53467&it=r&p=LitRC&sw=w&asid=2d96ed3657e394223f9e2590dd4f2d0a>

Discussion questions

- Gilbert writes that “the appreciation of pleasure can be the anchor of humanity,” making the argument that America is “an entertainment-seeking nation, not necessarily a pleasure-seeking one.” Is this a fair assessment?
- Gilbert hashes out internal debates in a notebook, a place where she can argue with her inner demons and remind herself about the constancy of self-love. When an inner monologue becomes a literal conversation between a divided self, is this a sign of last resort or of self-reliance?
- When Gilbert finally returns to Bali and seeks out the medicine man who foretold her return to study with him, he doesn’t recognize her. Despite her despair, she persists in her attempts to spark his memory, eventually succeeding. How much of the success of Gilbert’s journey do you attribute to persistence?
- Gender roles come up repeatedly in *Eat, Pray, Love*, be it macho Italian men eating cream puffs after a home team’s soccer loss, or a young Indian’s disdain for the marriage she will be expected to embark upon at age eighteen, or the Balinese healer’s sly approach to male impotence in a society where women are assumed responsible for their childlessness. How relevant is Gilbert’s gender?
- In what ways is spiritual success similar to other forms of success? How is it different? Can they be so fundamentally different that they’re not comparable?
- Do you think people are more open to new experiences when they travel? And why?

Questions taken from the Penguin Group’s Reading Guide

Available at http://www.us.penguinroup.com/static/rguides/us/eat_pray_love.html

Further reading

More by Elizabeth Gilbert:

Committed : a skeptic makes peace with marriage / Elizabeth Gilbert.

New York : Viking, 2010. 285 pages.

A sequel to Eat Pray Love, describing Gilbert's feelings about second marriages.

Similar reads:

Tales of a female nomad, by Rita Golden Gelman

Three weeks with my brother, Nicolas and Micah Sparks

Wild, by Cheryl Strayed

Bella Tuscany : the sweet life in Italy, by Frances Mayes

Down the Nile : alone in a fisherman's skiff, by Rosemary Mahoney

The lost girls : three friends, four continents, one unconventional detour around the world, by Jennifer Baggett

Undress me in the Temple of Heaven, by Susan Jane Gilman